UNITED NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/51/420
1 October 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Fifty-first session
Agenda item 97 (b)

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: SPECIAL SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF AN OVERALL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21

Report of the Secretary-General

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1 - 2	3
II.	PREPARATIONS FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION	3 - 44	3
	A. Commission on Sustainable Development and its Bureau	3 - 15	3
	B. Relevant activities carried out by the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and by organizations and bodies of the United Nations system	16 - 22	7
	C. High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development	23 - 24	8
	D. Information from Governments on progress achieved at the national level	25 - 27	9
	E. National, regional and subregional activities to support the preparatory process	28 - 31	10
	F. Rio Conventions	32 - 36	11
	G. Initiatives by major groups	37 - 39	12

96-25553 (E) 091096

/...

CONTENTS (continued)

		Paragraphs	Page
	H. Public information activities	40 - 42	13
	I. Status of contributions to the Trust Fund	43 - 44	14
III.	SOME PROPOSALS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL MODALITIES DURING THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE SPECIAL SESSION	45 - 52	14

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The convening of a special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 was envisaged in paragraph 38.9 of Agenda 21 adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1992. That recommendation of the Conference was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/190 on the report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

2. At its fiftieth session, the General Assembly considered a report of the Secretary-General containing proposals on the format, scope and organizational aspects of such a special session (A/50/453) and decided to convene that special session for a duration of one week during the month of June 1997 at the highest possible level of participation (resolution 50/113). The Assembly also determined organizational modalities for the preparations for the special session, including the relevant role of the Commission on Sustainable Development and of other relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system. Furthermore, the Assembly recognized the important role played by major groups, including non-governmental organizations, in the implementation of Conference recommendations and the need for their active involvement in the preparations for the special session, as well as the need to ensure appropriate arrangements for their contribution during the special session. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a number of reports for the consideration of the Commission containing an overall assessment of progress achieved since the Conference, together with recommendations for future actions and priorities; and to mount a public information programme to raise global awareness of both the special session and work undertaken by the United Nations in the follow-up to the Conference. Finally, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-first session a progress report on the state of preparations for the special session.

II. PREPARATIONS FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION

A. Commission on Sustainable Development and its Bureau

3. The General Assembly in its resolution 50/113 decided that the Commission on Sustainable Development would act as a central intergovernmental forum for the preparations for the special session. In particular the Assembly encouraged the participants in the fourth session of the Commission (18 April-3 May 1996) to address matters related to the special session; invited the Commission to devote its Ad Hoc Open-ended Inter-sessional Working Group meeting, to be held in February 1997, to assisting the Commission in undertaking the review for the special session; welcomed the decision of the Commission to devote its fifth session, in 1997, to preparations for the special session; and decided that that session of the Commission would be open-ended in its deliberations, allowing for the full participation of all States.

1. Fourth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

4. The high-level segment of the fourth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, held from 1 to 3 May 1996, was attended by almost 50 ministers and policy makers from all the regions of the world. The thrust of the discussion on matters related to the preparations for the special session was reflected in the Chairman's summary of the high-level segment that was included in the report of the Commission on its fourth session. 1/ The participants in the high-level segment stressed the vital importance of the special session, when the General Assembly will review the overall progress achieved in implementing the Rio commitments and discuss appropriate strategies for implementation in the coming years. It was stressed that participation in the special session at the highest possible level would be essential for its success.

5. The discussion showed that there was a broad consensus that the special session should not attempt to renegotiate Agenda 21, or other intergovernmental agreements in the field of sustainable development, but should concentrate on their further implementation. In this context, participants highlighted a number of objectives:

(a) To revitalize and energize commitment to the concept of sustainable development, to ensure it a central place on the political agenda and to reinforce momentum for its implementation at the international, national and local levels. Participants recognized the need to strengthen the Commission's public visibility and improve its outreach;

(b) To frankly recognize failures to meet certain goals and identify reasons for failure;

(c) To boost implementation of the Rio commitments through such means as the identification of innovative approaches to cooperation and financial assistance, and through concrete proposals for action;

(d) To define priorities for the period beyond 1997. A number of participants felt that the Commission should focus on a limited number of key issues rather than reviewing every chapter of Agenda 21, in particular those issues where it is felt that real progress could be made;

(e) To raise the profile of issues that had not been sufficiently addressed by the Conference or where significant developments had taken place since the Conference. Such issues might include changing consumption and production patterns, energy (including renewables) and transport, urban issues, enterprises, fresh water, and management of risks.

6. Participants in the high-level segment recognized that, in future work, more attention should be paid to addressing the driving forces that impacted on the sustainable management of natural resources while at the same time giving more attention to the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development, including combating poverty. The crucial link between the driving forces - economic growth and trade, consumption and production patterns and population growth - and resource management were the economic sectors that often defined

the way that policy-making and implementation were organized. To be truly effective, the Commission's consideration of resource management issues had to be combined with an equal emphasis on sectoral policy development. Many sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, industry, human settlements and social services, were already dealt with in existing forums in the United Nations system. The impact of the Conference and Agenda 21 on the work in those forums had helped to inject considerations of sustainability into their discussions. However, there were some gaps and, from the perspective of sustainability, the most obvious gap related to transport and energy.

7. Participants reflected on the implementation of Agenda 21 objectives since the Conference and noted the continuing need to strengthen mechanisms within the United Nations system which helped to integrate environmental concerns more fully into regular decision-making processes. Participants encouraged other intergovernmental bodies, especially the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, to ensure that sustainable development issues were taken into consideration in a systemic and consistent manner. A number of participants stressed the link between international and national follow-up and encouraged the Commission to promote the integration of conclusions from major international conferences, including those held at Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing and the then forthcoming Habitat II conference in Istanbul.

8. Particular stress was laid on the importance of devolving implementing actions from global to regional level, and decentralizing responsibilities from national to local level where appropriate. In highlighting the value and effectiveness of local empowerment, it was suggested that the United Nations might sponsor an award that would recognize globally significant examples of sustainable development undertaken at the local or micro-level.

9. Participants in the high-level segment stressed the importance of developing a broad-based consensus involving major groups for achieving sustainable development. The development of new partnerships between stakeholders, such as educators, scientists, Governments, non-governmental organizations, business and industry, trade unions, youth and the media, among others, was encouraged as a means to foster better communication and to get across the key issues of sustainable development. It was noted that closer involvement of the private sector was essential for achieving sustainable development, but that appropriate mechanisms of interaction still needed to be developed in that area.

10. Participants emphasized the importance of the involvement of major groups in the preparations for the 1997 special session and in the session itself, in accordance with the appropriate rules of procedure. They also welcomed initiatives for self-reporting by major groups in 1997.

2. Bureau of the Commission on Sustainable Development

11. The Bureau of the Commission on Sustainable Development met in New York on 15 July 1996. Preparations for the special session were in the focus of the discussion. The Bureau was informed about the process of preparation and format of documentation for the 1997 review to meet the requests for reporting related to the review contained in General Assembly resolution 50/113, decisions of the Commission and other intergovernmental mandates.

12. The Bureau welcomed the fact that the United Nations system, through the system of task managers of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, demonstrated its continuing commitment to and support for the Commission's work programme and would actively contribute to the preparations for the 1997 review. In particular, the Bureau expressed its satisfaction with the intention of the Secretariat to finalize most of the documentation early in 1997 so that it would be available prior to the 1997 meeting of the Commission's Ad Hoc Inter-sessional Working Group when formal intergovernmental preparations for the special sessions would commence.

13. Bearing in mind the discussions held during the high-level segment of the fourth session of the Commission, members of the Bureau considered that the special session should focus on the implementation of Agenda 21 and result in the adoption of an agreed statement or a declaration which would be action-oriented, and that the special session should have a high political profile. As for the process leading to the preparation of the final document of the special session, the Bureau, taking into account the provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/113, felt that it could be organized along the following lines:

(a) The Ad Hoc Inter-sessional Working Group of the Commission (24 February-7 March 1997), taking into account reports of the Secretary-General and other documentation, outcomes of various inter-sessional activities organized by Governments and organizations and other relevant inputs, would strive to agree on the format and structure of a final document and the main elements to be included in it. The outcome of the Working Group meeting would be a detailed outline of the final document;

(b) Such an outline would form the basis for negotiations during the fifth session of the Commission (7-25 April 1997), when the Commission should attempt to agree on the draft final document of the special session;

(c) The special session in June 1997 would resolve all outstanding issues that might remain bracketed after the fifth session of the Commission, and also reflect in the document any new developments, or proposals made, in the period between the fifth session of the Commission and the special session.

14. The Bureau agreed on the need for involvement of the Chairman and/or its members in the main inter-sessional activities and relevant intergovernmental meetings expected to make an input to the preparations for the special session.

15. The Bureau stressed the need for effective arrangements to allow major groups, including non-governmental organizations, to contribute to the preparations for and the deliberations during the special session. While the

Bureau agreed that the rules of procedure needed to be fully respected and that specific decisions on the participation of major groups in the session would be taken by the General Assembly, it also agreed that a number of activities could be organized during the special session with a view to ensuring effective input of major groups and their active inter-action with government representatives. The Bureau considered that it would be useful to assess and build upon the experience gained during previous special sessions of the General Assembly, and sessions of the Commission, as well as Habitat II and other recent meetings and intergovernmental processes, such as hearings in the context of the elaboration of the Agenda for Development.

B. Relevant activities carried out by the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and by organizations and bodies of the United Nations system

16. The General Assembly in its resolution 50/113 invited all relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, including the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the specialized agencies and other multilateral organizations, including multilateral financial institutions and WTO, to contribute to the special session, and requested the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, in close coordination with the Commission on Sustainable Development, to ensure an effective and coordinated system-wide response to the preparation of the special session. The Assembly also welcomed the decisions of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in which the Council emphasized the need for the Programme, in accordance with its mandate in the implementation of Agenda 21, to continue to provide effective support to the work of the Commission, and in which the Council decided to hold its nineteenth session early in 1997 with a view of making a contribution to the special session.

17. The Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development at its eighth session (10-12 July 1996) stressed the political importance of the preparations for the 1997 special session. The Committee agreed that the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and other relevant bodies, should actively contribute to making the special session a highly visible international event that would energize global commitment to the implementation of Agenda 21 and advance international dialogue and action for sustainable development.

18. The Committee agreed that it would be essential for the 1997 review to go beyond assessment of progress achieved in the Commission and in the United Nations system and to make a frank and analytical appraisal of the overall progress made and problems encountered at the international, national and local levels.

19. During the session of the Committee it was suggested that, in addition to their active involvement through the Committee's system of task managers in the preparation of the reports of the Secretary-General for the 1997 review, the organizations of the United Nations system would consider making their own contributions to the review process with a view to enriching the preparations for the fifth session of the Commission and the special session itself. In this context the Committee welcomed work carried out in UNCTAD in accordance with

General Assembly resolution 50/95 to prepare a comprehensive assessment on trade and environment and the work carried out by the World Health Organization to prepare a world health and environment report as important inputs to the special session. Preparatory work for the special session would also benefit from a mid-term review of the achievements in reaching the goals set out by the World Summit for Children, whose outcome had been fully incorporated in Agenda 21. The Committee considered that other important contributions could be received from regional commissions and the regulatory bodies of relevant conventions. Furthermore, there were high expectations that the final report of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests of the Commission would provide a significant contribution to the 1997 review and to forest-related work in general in the period after the special session. Another important expectation was connected with the ongoing global freshwater assessment.

20. Furthermore, it was considered that it would be essential to engage in this process, as far as possible, relevant governing bodies and intergovernmental meetings held under their auspices. An important input to the 1997 review would come from the World Food Summit which would address the issue of sustainability, and from the nineteenth session of the UNEP Governing Council, which would specifically consider the UNEP contribution to the special session.

21. The Committee underlined the significance of various country-driven initiatives, which would build up a political momentum leading to the special session. The Committee also noted with satisfaction a proposal made during the high-level segment of the fourth session of the Commission to organize a joint meeting of Ministers of Environment and Ministers of Finance as part of the preparatory process for the special session, and expressed the hope that interested countries would follow up on this promising initiative. Important contributions were also expected from non-governmental organizations and major groups.

22. The Administrative Committee on Coordination decided to submit a statement to the General Assembly at its special session, in which it would analyse the effectiveness of inter-agency arrangements established to follow up the Rio Conference and, on the basis of experience gained after the Conference, suggest ways of promoting more effective and efficient United Nations system-wide support in the area of sustainable development for the period after 1997.

C. High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development

23. The High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development, at its fifth session (29-31 January 1996), agreed that it should contribute to the 1997 review of progress achieved in the implementation of the Rio commitments by means of a concise report focusing on a few critical areas. The Board decided that it would examine the impediments to sustainable development in those areas and make independent recommendations as to how the impediments might be overcome. It proposed that the report be made available to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fifth session in April 1997. The Board also agreed that its members would consider initiatives to generate debate on the review in their own constituencies.

24. At its sixth session (4-6 September 1996), the Board agreed that its report would focus on three critical areas of sustainable development, namely, energy, transport and water resources. Within each of those areas, the report would examine policy measures for improving sustainable use, with an emphasis on economic factors, and make recommendations concerning policy packages that Governments might use, individually or collectively, to overcome the impediments to sustainable development. In addition to the policy analysis and recommendations, the report would include a number of brief descriptions of successful sustainable development policies in various countries, including rural wind energy programmes, energy taxes, tradeable emissions permits, urban transportation management, and river basin management. The Board also agreed that members would disseminate the report within their constituencies and organize meetings to consider how their recommendations might be implemented. The Board will complete its work on the report at its seventh session, in January 1997.

D. Information from Governments on progress achieved at the national level

25. The General Assembly, in its resolution 50/113, requested the Secretary-General to prepare for the consideration of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fifth session country profiles providing a concise presentation of progress made and constraints encountered in implementing Agenda 21 at the national level, compiled on the basis of national information received and in close cooperation with the Governments concerned. At its fourth session, the Commission welcomed and supported the preparation of those country profiles.

26. In response to those requests, the Secretariat prepared a common format for the profiles and circulated it to all Governments. For those 74 countries that have submitted national reports to the Commission, the Secretariat is preparing the draft profiles on the basis of the information contained in the national reports. As they are completed in draft form, the profiles are sent to the appropriate national focal points for comments, updating and approval by the Governments as necessary. Countries that have not yet been able to provide the Secretariat with a national report to the Commission have also been requested to complete a national profile in the common format.

27. The national profiles will support the analysis and assessment required for the documentation for the fifth session of the Commission, as envisaged in General Assembly resolution 50/113. In addition, all national profiles will be made available on the Internet following their approval by the Governments concerned. The Secretary-General would like to encourage all countries to continue providing the Commission with information on progress made and constraints encountered in implementing Agenda 21 at the national level, which will be of great value for the 1997 review.

E. National, regional and subregional activities to support the preparatory process

28. The General Assembly in its resolution 50/113 invited Governments as well as relevant regional and subregional organizations to consider undertaking reviews of progress achieved since the Rio Conference at the national, subregional, regional and interregional levels with a view to contributing to the preparations for the special session. The Assembly welcomed the preparation of hemispheric, regional and subregional conferences on sustainable development and invited Governments concerned to contribute to the special session the outcomes of such conferences.

29. A number of Governments are undertaking or are considering undertaking inter-sessional meetings and initiatives with a view to contributing to the 1997 review. The outcomes of such initiatives are expected to be presented to the Commission on Sustainable Development and/or the General Assembly at its special session directly by the Governments concerned. However, if such meetings or initiatives conclude by the end of November 1996, the Secretary-General would appreciate being informed of their outcomes so that they can be reflected, as appropriate, in the documentation prepared by the Secretariat.

30. With regard to the regional commissions and other regional organizations, various activities are being conducted as a contribution to the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly:

(a) In Africa, the first Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Sustainable Development and Environment was held in March 1996 at the initiative of the Economic Commission for Africa. It adopted the guidelines for monitoring the progress made in building critical management capacities for sustainable development in Africa as a framework instrument for harmonizing relevant activities in the region.

(b) In the Asian and Pacific region, the Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, which will hold its third session in October 1996, will conduct a regional review of progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the Rio Conference as an input to the fifth session of the Commission and the special session.

(c) In the region of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), a special session of the Committee on Environmental Policy was held in January 1996, which considered the outcome of the Ministerial Conference on Environment for Europe, held at Sofia in October 1995. The Environmental Programme for Europe adopted at the Sofia Conference represented a first attempt to set out a common direction to make Agenda 21 more operational in the ECE region.

(d) In the Latin American and Caribbean region, the contribution to the special session will be considered at the Tenth Meeting of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, to be held on 11 and 12 November 1996 at Buenos Aires, and the Hemispheric Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held on 7 and 8 December 1996 at Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, under the auspices of the Organization of American States.

(e) Upon the suggestion of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment, in May 1996, called upon all Arab countries to participate actively in the 1997 review, by such means as setting up national committees to prepare national reports on the implementation of Agenda 21. A synthesis of those reports will be considered at the next Council meeting in November 1996 and then forwarded to the special session. Furthermore, the ESCWA Committees on Energy and Water Resources are holding meetings early in 1997 to review ongoing and planned activities, thus providing regional perspectives on these issues to the 1997 review.

(f) Belarus announced at the fourth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development that it is organizing at Minsk a conference on sustainable development of countries with economies in transition.

31. Furthermore, the regional commissions, in cooperation with the regional offices of UNEP, are preparing inventories of regional initiatives in the area of sustainable development undertaken since the Rio Conference, or conducting regional reviews. The results of those exercises will be available at the special session.

F. Rio Conventions

32. The General Assembly, in its resolution 50/113, invited the conferences of parties or other regulatory bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, as well as the regulatory bodies of other relevant instruments, as appropriate, and the Global Environment Facility, to provide their inputs to the special session.

33. The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change agreed to make a special input, through its Subsidiary Body on Implementation, to the special session. The secretariat of the Convention has been requested by the Conference of the Parties, at its second session, to prepare a relevant submission for consideration by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation at its fifth session in February 1997.

34. In the case of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, its interim secretariat will prepare, after the January 1997 session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, an input summarizing the key provisions of the Convention, action taken prior to the Convention's entry into force and the outlook for the first session of the Conference of the Parties.

35. Pursuant to decision II/18 (annex), adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its second session, a report will be submitted to the General Assembly at its special session from the perspective of the Convention's three objectives: the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

The report will be considered by the Conference of the Parties at its third session (Buenos Aires, 4-14 November 1996).

36. The Global Environment Facility will also make an input to the special session.

G. Initiatives by major groups

37. The General Assembly in its resolution 50/113 recognized the important role played by major groups, including non-governmental organizations, at the Rio Conference and in the implementation of its recommendations, and recognized the need for their active involvement in preparations for the special session, as well as the need to ensure appropriate arrangements for their contribution during the special session.

38. The secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development prepared and distributed a set of guidelines (1997 Guidelines for Major Groups' Input) to all major group contacts currently in the database. These guidelines provide information on how major groups can contribute to the 1997 review process, the fifth session of the Commission and the special session of the General Assembly.

39. Major group organizations are also organizing various meetings independently or jointly with international organizations, non-governmental partners and Governments. These events aim to review and assess the Rio follow-up process as well as raise awareness about the 1997 review and follow-up activities in the period after 1997. Such initiatives include:

(a) Rio+5. A global assessment of sustainable development progress led by the Earth Council, in collaboration with numerous network non-governmental organizations and major group organizations, and in consultation with the secretariat of the Commission. In addition to organizations from each of the nine major group categories, the event involves the national councils for sustainable development, the media, and the religious and education communities, as well as various United Nations and non-United Nations international organizations. The culminating event is a week-long meeting at Rio de Janeiro (13 to 19 March 1997).

(b) Sustainable Development Indicators for Youth Project, Phase II. The project, led by Rescue Mission and other youth organizations around the world, is a follow-up to the youth panel/exhibition prepared for the fourth session of the Commission. The Children's State of the Planet Television Report, also led by Rescue Mission, is a major media campaign by youth on sustainable development and the 1997 review process.

(c) Survey of local Agenda 21 initiatives. This comprehensive survey of local efforts is led by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives and the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. This survey is the first comprehensive stocktaking exercise on the fast-growing local Agenda 21 movement around the world. It is estimated that more than 2,000 local governments and authorities have developed projects and frameworks for achieving local

sustainable development. The results of the survey will be presented to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fifth session and to the General Assembly at the special session.

(d) Survey on the future of the Commission on Sustainable Development, led by the World Federalist Movement and INTGLIM. 2/ This is based on a short survey and a series of interviews with United Nations staff members, as well as governmental and non-governmental experts. The leading organizations will submit the final report to the Ad Hoc Inter-sessional Working Group of the Commission, and to the Commission at its fifth session.

(e) The World Business Council for Sustainable Development is preparing a report and various events on the business perspective on sustainable development.

(f) Earth Summit II: A Business Input. A national level meeting organized by the United Nations Environment and Development (United Kingdom) and the International Chamber of Commerce (United Kingdom) to review business responses to sustainable development in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

(g) The Inter-Parliamentary Union will emphasize changing consumption and production patterns in its input to the 1997 review process, and it will follow up on its declaration on financing and transfer of technology, which was submitted to the Commission at its fourth session.

(h) Global Cities 21: Local Agenda 21 for Sustainable Communities. A meeting organized jointly by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, the Global Action Plan and the Earth Council to review contributions of local authorities, which will be held at Lisbon on 8 and 9 October 1996.

(i) A meeting of indigenous people will be held in Colombia in 1996 to prepare an input to the fifth session of the Commission and the special session, with special emphasis on forests.

H. Public information activities

40. The General Assembly in its resolution 50/113 requested the Secretary-General to mount a public information programme to raise global awareness of both the special session and the work undertaken by the United Nations in the follow-up to the Conference.

41. In response to that request, the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and the Department of Public Information are joining their efforts with a view to designing and implementing the media/public information strategy that will ensure broad outreach of the preparatory activities and of the special session, build awareness of sustainable development issues, promote further the goals and objectives of the Rio Conference and of the 1997 review, and, as follow-up to the special session, ensure dissemination of its results.

42. In implementing the strategy, the Secretariat intends to prepare various information materials and radio and television programmes and organize special media/public outreach activities. It will also strive to ensure the broadest possible dissemination, inter alia, through electronic means, of the official reports and documents prepared in connection with the 1997 review, including the outcomes of the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and of the special session itself. One of the challenges will be to ensure effective outreach in the developing countries.

I. Status of contributions to the Trust Fund

43. The General Assembly in its resolution 50/113 invited Governments to assist the developing countries, in particular the least developed among them, in participating fully and effectively in the special session and its preparatory process, and in that regard invited them to make appropriate contributions to the Trust Fund to Support the Work of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

44. Pursuant to that resolution, a note verbale soliciting contributions for the above-mentioned purposes has been circulated by the Secretary-General to all Member States and Observers. The Secretary-General would like to reiterate his appeal to all interested countries for relevant contributions to the Trust Fund, earmarked for assisting the participation of developing countries in the special session of the General Assembly.

III. SOME PROPOSALS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL MODALITIES DURING THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE SPECIAL SESSION

45. A number of general proposals for the organization of the 1997 special session and its preparatory process were brought to the attention of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session (see A/50/453). While specific decisions about the organization of work during the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the special session itself will be taken by the Commission upon the recommendation of its Bureau and by the General Assembly, the Secretary-General would like to make some additional suggestions on this matter for the consideration of Member States.

46. Concerning the formal intergovernmental part of the 1997 review, bearing in mind previous practice, the provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/113 and current discussions in the Commission and its Bureau, it is likely that the main work on the text of the final document of the special session will be done during the fifth session of the Commission, which will largely be a negotiating meeting. During the special session itself, in parallel to the plenary meetings of the Assembly where a high-level debate will take place, an ad hoc committee of the whole, reporting to the plenary, could be established. The role of the committee will be to reach agreement on all outstanding matters in the final document.

47. Bearing in mind the provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/113 and the recommendations of the Commission at its fourth session, an important

challenge will be to ensure appropriate arrangements that will allow major groups, including non-governmental organizations, to make their contribution to the meetings with due respect to the existing rules of procedure.

48. It is likely that during the fifth session of the Commission and the special session of the General Assembly a number of Governments, international organizations and major groups will organize, individually and jointly, various informal side events, presentations and briefings with a view to contributing to a more formal intergovernmental process. It would be useful to ensure that contributions from major groups to such events will be organized in a systematic way. Some suggestions in this regard are made in the following paragraphs.

49. During the fifth session of the Commission, one possibility would be to organize, in parallel with the drafting groups that will work on the text of the final document of the special session, hearings involving representatives of Governments, major groups and eminent persons, devoted to an assessment of the existing and potential role, and contribution to its implementation, of each of the major groups identified in Agenda 21. Summaries of such hearings could either be included in the report of the Commission on its fifth session or made orally by the Commission at the special session.

50. During the special session itself, the formal debate in plenary meeting could be interspersed with panels and/or dialogue sessions with world leaders or other eminent persons covering a wide spectrum.

51. While the organizational recommendations relating to the fifth session of the Commission could appropriately be made by the Bureau of the Commission, the views and recommendations of the General Assembly will be important for the organization of the special session and parallel events envisaged at that time.

52. As to the dates for the special session, the Secretary-General, bearing in mind the calendar of other United Nations meetings and conferences and the provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/113, recommends that it be held from 7 to 13 June 1997.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 8 (E/1996/28).

2/ International non-governmental organization working group on legal and institutional matters.